

November 18, 2009

James L. Oberstar, M.C.
Chairman

John L. Mica, M.C.
Ranking Member

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar and Ranking Member Mica,

RE: WRDA; North Atlantic Coastal and Marine Management Plan

The Nature Conservancy supports the request submitted by Congressman LoBiondo to provide authority for the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) North Atlantic Division to prepare and implement a "North Atlantic Coastal and Marine Management Plan" encompassing the coastal states from Maine to Virginia.

The proposed language requested by Congressman LoBiondo would provide authority for the Corps of Engineers to work with The Nature Conservancy and other non-profits, federal, state, and local agencies to assess the needs and opportunities for aquatic ecosystem restoration in the coastal waters of the Corps' North Atlantic Division. The authority would require the Corps to develop a General Coastal and Marine Management Plan which will serve as the basis for future restoration projects. Once the plan is completed, the authority would allow for the implementation of restoration projects with a per project Federal limit of \$5,000,000. A separate partnership agreement with an eligible non-Federal sponsor would be required for each individual project. The authority would contain an annual appropriations limit of \$15,000,000.

We understand that to enable the Corps to pursue the Plan and the restoration and stewardship projects that it will identify, a new Congressional Authority under the Water Resources Development Act is necessary. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is pleased to support this effort. Recently, TNC has led an effort to develop a "North Atlantic Marine Ecoregional Assessment" (NAM ERA) in partnership with multiple federal, state and non-governmental organizations, including the Corps. We believe this assessment, which includes and integrates advanced scientific data on marine ecosystems of the North Atlantic, will enhance the work of the Corps in the planning effort described above.

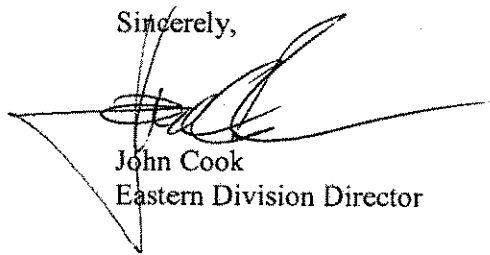
Although it is expected that the planning phase will be 100% federally funded, TNC will have contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars toward this effort through its work on the North Atlantic Marine Ecoregional Assessment (NAM ERA). We also look forward to continuing our work with the Corps in the development of the Coastal and Marine Management Plan and thereafter through participation in the implementation of restoration and stewardship projects.

Regarding the implementation phase, The Nature Conservancy intends to pursue our share of the required 35% non-federal match (cash and/or in-kind) through private and public fund raising for projects appropriate for our participation. Identification of these TNC projects will be a function of the Corps Plan and the applicability of the projects to how TNC is best able to carry out its organizational mission. We also recognize the important role other non-federal partners will play in implementing specific projects and look forward to assisting in identifying these partners where appropriate.

Finally we would highlight that TNC has an excellent track record in working with the Corps of Engineers and following through as a non-federal sponsor. The multi-year hydrological modeling project for the Connecticut River basin is one such example, being accomplished under the Authority within Section 3155 of the 2007 WRDA.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you toward a sustainable coastal and marine environment.

Sincerely,



John Cook
Eastern Division Director